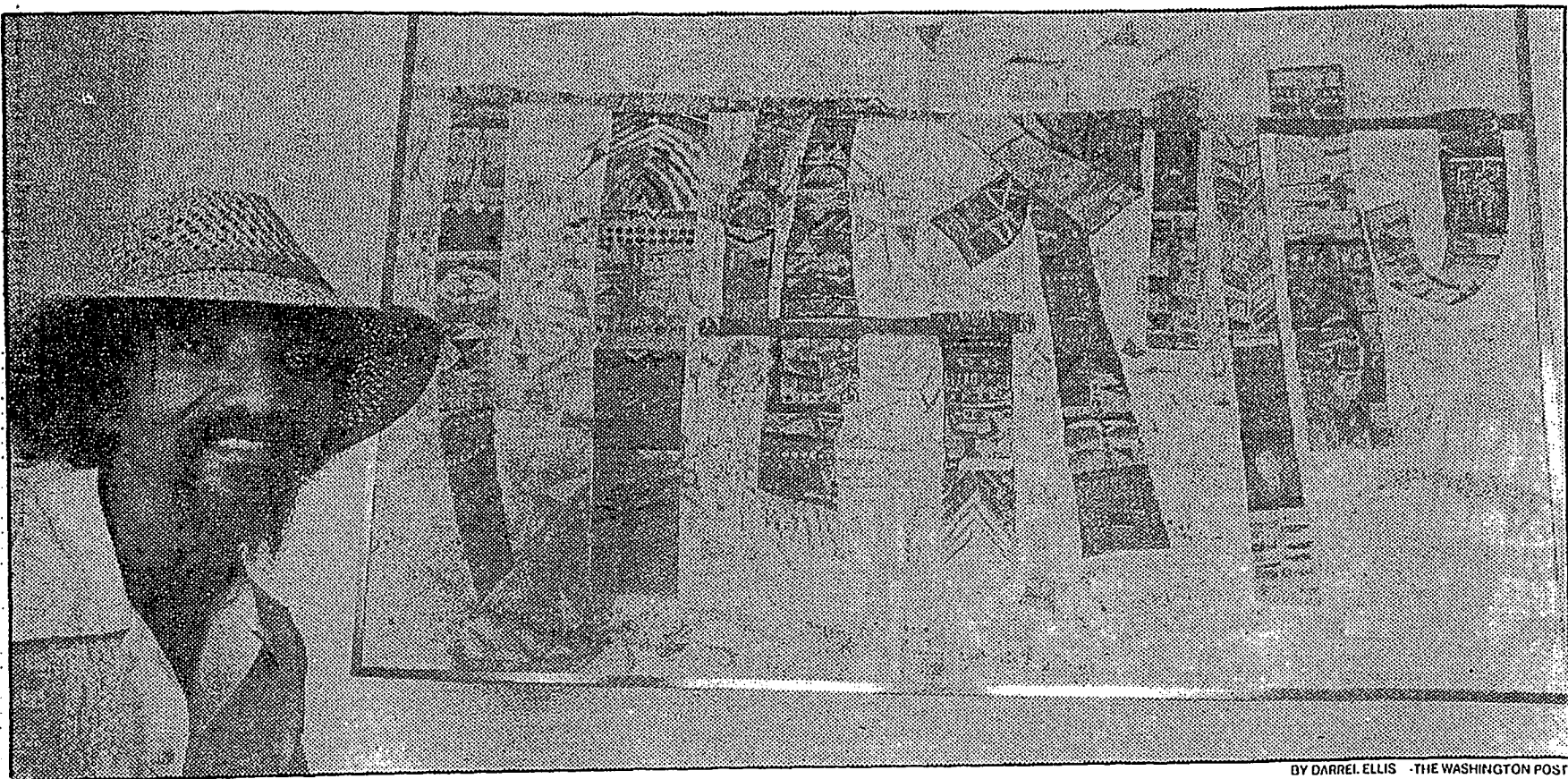


## Style/Arts



Skunder Boghossian: "We do accept new ideas. But it takes us a long time to digest it and understand why [Ethiopian art] needs to be changed."

## Spotlight

## Recapturing Recognition

## Ethiopian Artists Struggling in the States

By Lynn Weisberg and Len Cooper

Special to The Washington Post

In his homeland, Skunder Boghossian was celebrated.

In fact, the Ethiopian artist was one of the most celebrated painters throughout the Horn of Africa, a winner of the Haile Selassie I Prize, the highest honor for fine arts in Ethiopia. He and his wife were the toast of the town, invited several times each month to gala affairs for ambassadors and visiting foreign dignitaries.

"We were on the list of protocol," says Boghossian. "During the week we were sampling foods from other African countries, France, America and Trinidad. Socially we were burned out."

But all that changed when Boghossian moved to the United States in 1969, the beginning of a long struggle to regain artistic recognition.

Seated amid the clutter of works in progress that fill his living room, Boghossian reflects on the obstacles faced by Ethiopian artists who came to the Washington area in the late '60s and early '70s as the Selassie government was declining.

While most of them have both a degree from Ethiopia's Addis Ababa School of Fine

Arts and international exposure, their credentials have opened the doors not to national museums and exhibits, but to sparsely attended gallery and restaurant displays, he says.

"Certain artists receive more recognition [but] others have been neglected because of their lack of contacts," he says. "They are going through some difficult times here and abroad, which is also due to lack of funds for grants and scholarships. It has crippled the creativity of emerging talents."

Boghossian, 49, now teaches art at Howard University while he continues to try to recapture his glory days by producing such works as "Climatic Effects," a stylized, two-dimensional interpretation of ancient Ethiopian scrolls in hanging position. He uses goatskin on canvas as his painting surface.

His work has been shown in New York at the Merton Simpson Gallery; in Ibadan, Nigeria; and at the Musée d'Art in Paris. He was one of two Ethiopian artists in an exhibition of contemporary African art at California State University at Dominguez earlier this year, and some of his work is now traveling America—in a show called "American Experience"—and Europe—in "Art Against Apartheid," a collection that participants hope will be the foundation for one of the first black museums in

South Africa if the government in Pretoria changes.

Achameleh Debela, who teaches art at the University of Maryland's Eastern Shore campus, introduced contemporary Ethiopian art to the United States with an exhibition at Morgan State University in 1973. Next year, the Smithsonian's Center for African, Near Eastern and Asian Cultures opens on the Mall, and Debela hopes both traditional and contemporary Ethiopian art will find a permanent place there.

"Museums and galleries aren't as opened for Ethiopian and contemporary African art," said Debela. "We are hoping [that] with the building of the new \$75 million facility, both forms [contemporary and traditional art] can be shown. Our tradition is brought into the 20th century through our art expression."

Ethiopia is the oldest Christian empire in Africa, rich in pictorial art history. Its rock-hewn monolithic churches, considered wonders of the world, are adorned in colorful ornaments, icons and illuminated religious manuscripts, such as hand-printed Ge'ez (now the language of the church) on goatskin.

Ethiopian art mirrors the country's rich history. Most finished works reflect religious, political and daily strife in Ethiopia. Bold, almost blinding, colors strike the canvas, causing the subjects to leap from the earth-toned background of the paintings.

"We do accept new ideas," says Boghossian. "But it takes us a long time to digest it and understand why [Ethiopian art] needs to be changed."

Boghossian says the word "new" is an inherently American concept, adding "we are not afraid of fiery ideas, but they have to be assimilated in an Ethiopian manner."

## Arts Beat

## The Marines' Musical Fourth

## Salute to Miss Liberty by 'The President's Own'

By David Saltman  
Special to The Washington Post

The U.S. Marine Band—called by Thomas Jefferson "the President's Own"—claims that it is America's "oldest, continuously active musical organization." Fitting, then, that it figures large in the Liberty Weekend celebrations beginning Friday.

The fireworks spectacular in New York City will be synchronized to four original compositions the Marine Band recorded last month at its home, the Marine Barracks at Eighth and I streets SE. The works were composed by Liberty Weekend music director Joe Raposo.

On the morning of the Fourth, the President's Own will perform for the president aboard the USS Iowa in the harbor during a naval review. The next morning the band will join the New York Philharmonic, James Galway, Marilyn Horne, Plácido Domingo, Sherrill Milnes and Pinchas Zukerman at a classical concert in Central Park.

Unlike the other Liberty Weekend participants, the Marine Band is making a return trip. It went to New York City 100 years ago for the dedication of Lady Liberty. At that time, the band was directed by John Philip Sousa. Staff Sgt. Anne Skelly, a Marines spokeswoman, points out that the event was memorialized in an Edward Moran painting, "The Unveiling of the Statue of Liberty Enlightening the World," which now hangs in the Museum of the City of New York. In the lower right-hand corner of the painting are 30 red-coated musicians playing aboard a ship. Those musicians, says Skelly, are members of the Marine Band.

Members of the Marine Band also perform in three smaller units: the Marine Dance Band, the Marine Dixieland Band and the Marine Orchestra. The orchestra performs at Wolf Trap Friday night.

In other Liberty news: The results of a national student graphics competition—an exhibit of 30 posters, design symbols and three-dimensional pieces celebrating Lady Liberty's 100th—go on display tomorrow at the American Institute of Architects' building at 1735 New York Ave. NW.

## Aiding Local Arts Agencies

National Endowment for the Arts Chairman Frank Hodsoll spoke Friday at the Mayflower Hotel before the National Assembly of Local Arts Agencies, which met in Washington for the first time last week.

Noting the success of NEA's Locals Test Program, Hodsoll announced that it will become a permanently funded entity of the endowment. Begun in 1984, the program makes grants to local arts agencies—like D.C.'s own Commission on the Arts and Humanities—which must then match the money with local tax dollars. The funds are used for everything from hiring a permanent conductor, as the Durham, N.C., Symphony Orchestra did, to establishing a recording studio, as a nonprofit group in Atlanta did. There is a move to allow local agencies to match NEA funds not only with local tax money, but also with private sector money. The program has especially helped smaller arts organizations that normally cannot qualify for federal grants, says NEA spokeswoman Katherine Christie. Delegates to the meeting lobbied congressmen on Capitol Hill Thursday.

## Odds and Ends

Phillips Collection Curator Willem de Looper will give a free talk at 12:30 p.m. Thursday at the Phillips on "Contemporary Painting: The Changing Surface." . . . A new monthly publication, Washington Art Report, features gallery reviews and other articles on the visual arts . . . The NEA announced \$9 million in grants to orchestras around the country last week. Among those receiving funds locally: the National Symphony Orchestra, \$244,000; and the American Symphony Orchestra League, \$231,800.

## The Soviets' Art Hit

The show of impressionist paintings from the Soviet Union that drew large crowds to the National Gallery of Art is drawing similar-sized crowds to the Los Angeles County Museum of Art—and these art lovers are paying. More than half the \$2 to \$4 tickets for the seven-week run have already been sold.

## New Music Commissions

For the 1988 New York International Festival of the Arts, announced with enormous hoopla earlier this year, Chase Manhattan Bank is funding \$150,000 worth of original musical commissions by seven American composers. Stephen Albert, Jacob Druckman, Ned Rorem, Christopher Rouse and Joseph Schwanter will compose orchestral works, and Gunther Schuller and William Schuman will compose chamber music.

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## LOSING WEIGHT, NOT SANITY



## GARY ALAN'S STORY



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Gary Alan, mid-day radio personality for WASH 97.1 FM, is a man with a mission. On March 12, 1986, he set a goal: to become as proportionately thin as the Washington Monument. At the time, he believed he more closely resembled the Pentagon.

Alan attributes his weight problem to a "gourmet food habit." He never ate "just a steak" at dinner. "It was always a fancy multi-course extravaganza complete with a bottle of wine," he said. His second weakness was eating to relieve boredom. Very common.

But when Alan made his pledge to trim down for his 30th birthday in August, he had a gut feeling that lifetime slimness was finally within reach.

He enrolled at Physicians Weight Loss Centers where patients are medically-supervised by a staff of doctors, nurses and certified counselors. A safe weight loss of three to seven pounds per week is guaranteed.

After six weeks, Alan has dropped a total of 42 pounds. In addition, his blood pressure dropped from a dangerous 160 over 110 to 122 over 70. He is now a believer.

"I found it impossible to maintain my weight eating normal foods after losing weight using special packaged foods," Alan said. He believes that since Physicians Weight Loss Centers' program involves everyday foods, he is more likely to maintain his ideal weight.

Gary Alan is living proof that a person does not have to sacrifice their sanity and health to lose pounds quickly and permanently. With the right program, dieters can have their cake and eat it too. Just don't bother offering Alan a slice.

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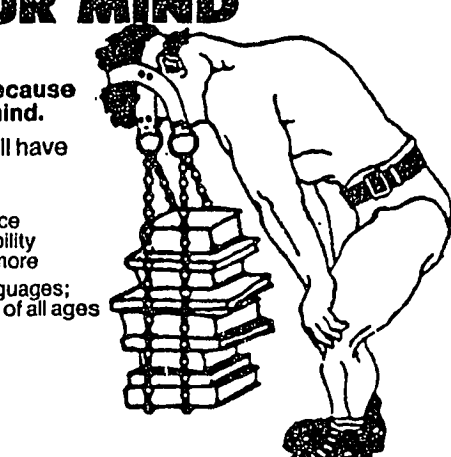
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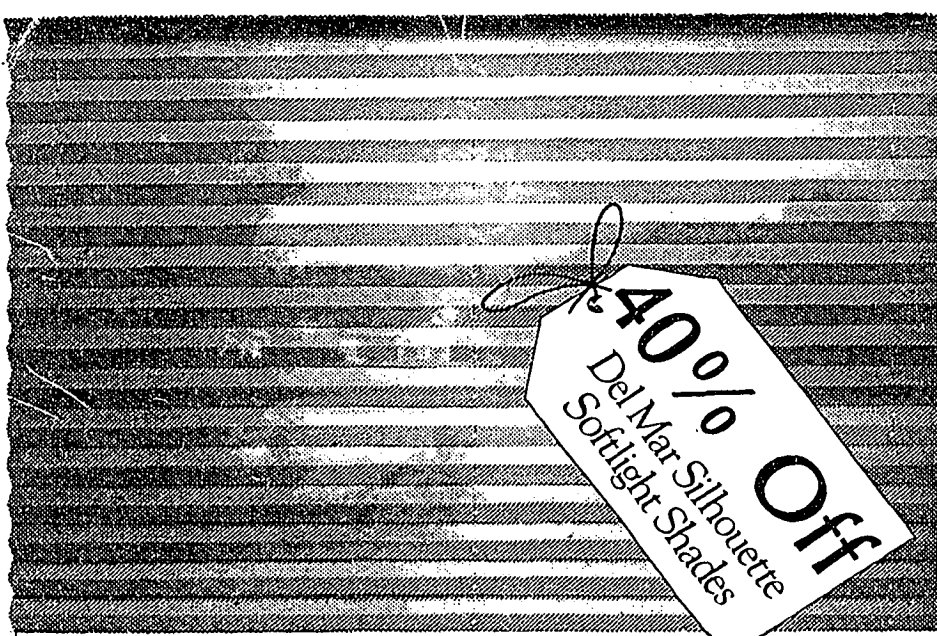
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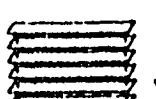


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